

# A JOHNSONIAN NEWS LETTER

Vol. I No. 5      Address communications to J. L. Clifford  
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June, 1941

This will probably be the last issue before September, but your editor hopes that throughout the summer you will send in any news items or queries which might be of interest to other readers.

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## PROGRAM FOR INDIANAPOLIS

Because of the interest shown by group members in the program at Boston last year, the officers of English VIII have decided to experiment with a symposium on the relation of the study of ideas to the literature of our period. Marjorie Nicolson (Columbia) has agreed to give the leading paper as a basis for discussion, and Ronald Crane (Chicago) has agreed to steer the discussion. A second paper will be chosen from those submitted before September. Will anyone interested please get in touch immediately with our chairman, "Pete" Jones (West. Res.) or with the secretary, Dixon Wecter (U.C.L.A.).

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## PERIODICAL INDEX

One of the most valuable tools for 18th century research now in preparation is the Subject Index to British Periodicals before 1802, being compiled at Yale under the direction of Jim Osborn. It covers the periodicals for the century and a half before Poole's Index, though much more intensively; every article is read from beginning to end, and each constituent subject is given a separate entry. So far more than 60,000 cards have been completed, or about a fourth of the whole undertaking. With luck the volumes may be completed in another ten years.

Fortunately the indexing began with periodicals of which no copies - according to Crane and Kaye - are held by American Libraries. The cards for these periodicals are now safe in the Yale library. One indexer is still at work at Oxford, but the results of almost a year's labor recently were blasted to bits when a packing case full of completed cards was destroyed by a bomb as it awaited transfer from the docks to a waiting ship. Most of the financial loss was covered by insurance, but the time spent in preparing the cards cannot be replaced. Thanks to the kindness of Strickland Gibson, however, the Bodleian officials have now agreed to store the cards in a safe repository with the University archives.

In this country during the past year the staff at Yale have indexed most of the periodicals before 1714, including Defoe's Review.

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## NEWS FROM ENGLAND

Detailed information about the bombing of English libraries in London, Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol, etc., may be found in the Supplement of Bulletins from Britain, No. 36, May 7, 1941. Copies may be secured from the British Library of Information, 50 Rockefeller Plaza, New York City.

L. F. Powell writes from Oxford that the Clarendon Press plans to publish Walter Graham's edition of Addison's letters, and Katharine Balderston's edition of Mrs. Piozzi's diary Thraliana in June. Scholarly printing seems to continue almost as usual.

## MANUSCRIPTS

Bob Metzdorf sends word that the University of Rochester has recently acquired by purchase a collection of 256 miscellaneous manuscripts and autograph letters. Most of the items are concerned with English literary figures of the 18th and early 19th centuries. The material supplements the University collection, of which a catalogue was issued in 1940, and is a complement to the R. B. Adam Collection, which is on deposit in the University library.

One of the outstanding groups of material is connected with Mrs. Piozzi, and contains letters addressed to her from Thomas Percy, Robert Merry, and James Marriott, among others.

There are two letters to Dr. Johnson -- one from Bennet Langton and the other from Samuel J. C. Pratt, who begs Johnson for £40 ("thirty would do") to save him from a debtor's prison.

Percy is represented by four letters, with several more written to him by various correspondents. William Hayley addresses Anna Seward in typical exaggerated phrases in two of the pieces, and letters of many other important figures are included in the collection.

Mr. R. B. Adam Jr. has recently loaned the University a copy of the 1773 Reynolds portrait of Johnson, as well as a magnificent set of the four volume Chambers Life of Burns, extended by extra-illustration to seventeen volumes. This set is bound in blue full morocco by The Club Bindery, and the grangerizing includes many plates and views, as well as letters of persons mentioned in the text. The original manuscript of Burns' "The Auld Man's Mare is Dead" is bound in, along with many facsimiles of Burns material.

Our readers will be glad to know that the great Owen D. Young collection, which contains much 18th

century material, has been acquired by the New York Public Library at 42nd St. A letter from John D. Gordon, the curator, gives the information that the manuscripts will be available for study only after the entire collection has been catalogued -- at least six months to a year from now. Our News Letter will let you know when the material is ready for use.

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## A NEW JOHNSON STORY

A highly interesting item of Johnsoniana has been brought to light by that indefatigable researcher R. T. Haines Halsey, who, following a career which included such activities as serving on the Board of Governors of the New York Stock Exchange and building up the American Wing of the Metropolitan Art Museum, has recently become a member of the staff of the Yale Library. In the St. James's Chronicle for June 10-13, 1775, Halsey found that Dr. Johnson was well enough known in America to achieve the dubious honor of being burned in effigy! The incident was reported to Londoners in the following paragraph:

"The last advices from Boston (among other Particulars equally curious) bring word that on the arrival of Taxation No Tyranny, A celebrated political pamphlet, the supposed author of it was burnt in effigy at Salem. He was first carried through the streets, preceded by a number of musicians, who played the noted tune of Yanky Doodle, that very tune which so charmed the truly musical ears of the late Sir Joel Collier, when he heard it performed on the banks of the Severn. The Head of the Figure was decorated with a Perriwig, which is said to have been purchased from James Boswell, Esq., who designed to have it kept as a relic of his Saint; but with a spirit truly Corsican, consented to part with it, on a supposition that it might serve the cause of liberty, which its ancient master had de-



scribed. The Cloaths in which this Representative of the Pinsioner appeared, consisted of a Suit resembling that in which he so gracefully returned Thanks to Lord Bute for his Patronage. We have no doubt (says our Boston Correspondent) if he should write a second Pamphlet to prove that the troupe of General Gage did not run away from the Provincials, and that Lord Percy has only ravished the wives of Messrs. Hancock and Otis that the Doctor will at the same Time take an opportunity to return no Sesquipedalian Thanks for the honor we have conferred upon him."

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THE PARADISE TABLE

Among the show places of historic Williamsburg, Virginia, is the Ludwell-Paradise House, one of the more pretentious of the colonial residences of the city. Here once lived Lucy Ludwell Paradise, the widow of John Paradise (whose life is being written by A.B. Shepperson of the Univ. of Va.), the friend of Dr. Johnson. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale often dined in London with the Paradises, where the conversation was apt to be unconventional and startling. For instance, Laetitia Matilda Hawkins recalled of Mrs. Paradise that once "at the head of her table, with a large dinner-party, perceiving that a plate before her was not quite clean, she beckoned the servant, and said to him in an audible whisper: - 'If you bring me a dirty plate again I will break your head with it!'" (Memoirs, 1, 72)

The beautiful dining room table, around which so many celebrated guests had sat, was brought by Mrs. Paradise to this country early in the 19th century, and was long an object of interest and veneration to the inhabitants of Williamsburg. At the death of Mrs. Paradise the table was bought by Dr. Alex D. Galt, and later was in the possession of Miss Mary Jeffery Galt. It is now in Lexington, Va., in the home of Mrs. Paul Welles (Elizabeth Ashe Galt), who calls it one of her

family's "choicest possessions". And well it may be! How many hundred cups of tea must have been passed over this table to the most insatiable of tea drinkers! How many brilliant arguments and Blue-stocking rejoinders must have flashed across its polished surface!

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NEWTON SALE PRICES

A list of some of the more important prices paid by collectors at the second part of the A. Edward Newton sale, May 14-16, may be found in the N. Y. Herald Tribune, Books, for June 1, 1941, p. 16. The total amount realized was \$105,932.50; the total for the first part was \$185,050.

Dr. A.S.W. Rosenbach paid \$650 for Dr. Johnson's tea pot, and \$530 for a series of documents relating to the Dodd affair. Goldsmith's letter to Garrick brought \$1400. The prices for Johnson's Dictionary varied from \$350 to \$80. In general the prices may be considered fairly high, but not approaching the ones paid in the years of prosperity.

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COMMENTS ON THE NEWS LETTER

Your editor cannot refrain from passing on some of the comments received in recent letters about the usefulness of the new project.

Finley Foster (West. Res.) writes: "Every issue is interesting and well done. You are showing very clearly what an MLA group can do."

Howard P. Vincent (Hillsdale) adds: "Belatedly but sincerely I wish to express enthusiastic approval of (a) A Johnsonian News Letter, which has already been useful as well as entertaining, and (b) the plan for a Group dinner at the M. L. A. meeting in Indianapolis."

Many thanks for this encouragement; but some stinging rebukes for errors, and constructive criticisms, will also be very gladly received.